

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action January 3, 2007 and the Advisory Action dated March 17, 2007. Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 26 and 27 are presented for examination, of which Claims 1, 6 and 15 are in independent form. Claims 1, 6 and 15 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

In the January 3, 2007 Office Action, Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5, 579,126 (Otsuka) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,598,533 (Yokota) and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,825,854 (Larson). Claim 26 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Otsuka, in view of Yokota and Larson as applied to Claim 1, and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,295,181 (Kuo).

On April 13, 2007, Applicant's attorney conducted in telephonic interview with the Examiner. During that interview, Applicant argued that Otsuka does not teach or suggest the determining means of the present invention for the reasons set forth in the April 3, 2007 Response After Final Action, including that Otsuka is not directed to a system with a plurality of external printers and, therefore, does not require a determining means. The Examiner responded that systems using a plurality of external printers were well known in the art. He further stated that it is his position that the determination means, as defined by the current claim language, is taught by Otsuka because it discusses that the facsimile apparatus requests entry of a user name and password (See Figure 9, steps 601 and 602). The Examiner further explained that his position is that when the source station receives this request, that constitutes a "determination"

that user management information is needed. On the other hand, if the source station does not receive such a request, that constitutes a determination that user management information is not needed according to the Examiner. This constitutes the Statement of Substance of the Interview.

As shown above, Applicant has amended independent Claims 1, 6 and 15 in terms that more clearly define what he regards as his invention. Applicant submits that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

The amendments to the claims are supported in the specification on at least page 16, lines 1-4.

Claim 1 is directed to an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network. The image reading apparatus includes: (1) generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal; (2) selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses; (3) determination means for determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not; (4) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative; (5) output means for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus; (6) reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user

management information; and (7) transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Among other notable features of Claim 1 are: (1) determination means for determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not; and (2) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative.

Otsuka relates to a facsimile apparatus which is linked to a local area network including two or more personal computers and operates on the local area network as a facsimile server for transmitting document files. The Otsuka system records the sending history of a user of a facsimile apparatus and only sends password information to the facsimile apparatus and not to a reception station of the document files. In the Otsuka system, there are three types of devices, a source station (one of a plurality of personal computers and/or an external station), a facsimile apparatus, and one of a plurality of reception devices. Otsuka discusses a log-in procedure to start a computer session, where the facsimile apparatus always requests a user to enter a user name and password on a source station, and receives the user name and password from the source station.

Otsuka discusses, in column 11, lines 5-10, that a log-in procedure “is performed to start a computer session between one personal computer and the facsimile apparatus” (emphasis added). In column 11, lines 10-15 (steps 601 and 601, Fig. 9) Otsuka also discusses

that in the log-in procedure, the facsimile apparatus requests that the user enters the user name and password on the source station and receives the entered username and password from the source station. However, Applicant has found nothing in Otsuka, even as broadly construed by the Examiner (see pages 7-8, above), that would teach or suggest “determination means for determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not,” as recited in Claim 1.

The Office Action also cites column 11, lines 10-15 as disclosing the input control means of Claim 1. Applicant respectfully disagrees. Column 11, lines 10-15 (steps 601 and 601, Fig. 9) merely discusses that, in the log-in procedure, the facsimile apparatus requests that the user enter the user name and password on the source station, and receives the entered username and password from the source station. Since as discussed above, there is no disclosure of the determination means in Otsuka, there can be no disclosure of an input control unit for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative.

Further, as discussed in the April 3, 2007 Response After Final, Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Office Action’s statement (page 2) that “the program that accepts user input of management information” satisfies this claim element. First, Applicant does not believe that Otsuka discloses such a program. However, even if it did, a program accepting user input of management information is different from controlling the input of such information, as recited in Claim 1. Otsuka merely discloses that a user of a facsimile apparatus (IFAX) is always

required to input his/her login name or password information on a personal computer (PC1), and, unlike the structure recited in Claim 1, does not disclose a feature to control whether or not to input a user management information depending on a need of the selected external printing apparatus.

Accordingly, Applicant has found nothing in Otsuka that would teach or suggest “input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted, when the result of the determination indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative,” as recited in Claim 1.

Neither Yokota nor Larsen remedy the deficiencies of Otsuka. Yokota merely discloses a compound electronic apparatus having a general purpose personal computer function and an image scanner 22. Similarly, Larson merely discloses a plurality of computers connected to a plurality of facsimile apparatus. Neither of these references teaches or suggests the “determination means” or the “input control means” recited in Claim 1.

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant’s opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as a reference against Claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 1 is patentable over Otsuka, Yokota and Larsen, whether considered separately or in combination.

Independent Claims 6 and 15 are method and computer readable memory claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 1, and are believed to be patentable over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 1.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the

independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests early and favorable continued examination on the merits.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

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